

10. ONE-STOP SERVICES FOR EMPLOYERS

INTRODUCTION

The success of local One-Stop systems depends on their ability to both help employers find qualified workers and help job seekers prepare for and enter high-quality jobs with career potential. Both employers and job seekers are facing new challenges in the global economy, as a result of rapid changes in work-place technology and the skills required of workers. In an expanding economy in which local unemployment rates often hover between three to five percent—down from eight to ten percent a decade ago—careful attention to current and projected employer needs is essential if One-Stop systems are to succeed in balancing the needs of employer and job-seeker customers.

Many firms require high-quality affordable services to help them recruit, screen, select, and train qualified workers for new job openings. Over the last decade, a number of firms have reduced their internal capacity to conduct staff hiring and training by trimming staff from their human resources divisions. As a result, many firms have begun obtaining from labor-market intermediaries a variety of staffing-related services—including help in recruiting, screening, and training new staff, leasing workers to staff functions that had previously been carried out by regular employees, and out-sourcing work previously performed internally.

Employers are also seeking assistance in training incumbent workers for evolving job responsibilities in the rapidly changing workplace. Increasingly, employers are encouraging or requiring current employees to upgrade their skills over time to keep up with changing workplace demands. They are looking for assistance from public and private training providers in developing and delivering customized training to members of their current workforce.

The objective of most One-Stop systems is to promote local economic growth and vitality by making it easier for employers to meet their hiring and staff development needs. However, to succeed in marketing their services to employers, One-Stop partners often have to overcome widespread employer dissatisfaction with previous

public sector labor exchange and training programs.¹ Many employers have expressed frustration with public-sector workforce development agencies, complaining that staff were unresponsive to their needs and that the services they received were confusing and duplicative, required excessive paperwork, and resulted in the referral of inappropriate job applicants.

One-Stop systems have taken on the challenge of changing employers' low opinions of public workforce development services by redesigning "core" labor exchange services for employers. They have also begun developing a number of "enhanced" employer services—including management assistance, intensive recruitment and applicant screening for large-scale hiring efforts, and designing and conducting customized training for incumbent workers.

In this chapter, we describe (1) how the One-Stop states and case study sites have developed new objectives for designing and delivering services to employers, (2) the specific services developed to further each of these goals, and (3) the challenges faced and accomplishments achieved by these sites in transforming workforce development systems to better meet employers' needs.

GOALS FOR TRANSFORMING EMPLOYER SERVICES

Strategies for improving employer services have been developed to address several goals:

1. Redefining the employer as a core customer of the public workforce development system.
2. Providing simplified access to an integrated menu of employer services.
3. Linking employers to high quality information responsive to their needs and interests.
4. Improving the quality of labor exchange services for employers.
5. Offering enhanced employer services on a fee-for-service basis (and free of charge to firms that qualify for special assistance).

¹ One-Stop planners in one large metropolitan area which conducted a survey of local employers found that only about 10% of area employers used the public labor exchange system. Furthermore, most employers that listed hourly jobs with public workforce development services did not consider public sector services when seeking individuals to fill salaried positions.

GOAL 1. REDEFINING THE EMPLOYER AS A CORE CUSTOMER OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Case study sites recognized that they needed to redesign their basic employer services—even core services available free of charge—to attract a larger share of the employer market. To convince a wide range of employers to use One-Stop services when they needed staffing-related services, One-Stop centers had to reassure local employers that they would receive services that compared favorably with the help they could purchase from private labor market intermediaries. One of the keys to getting many employers to try the services available from One-Stop centers was to convince employers that they were important and valued customers of the public workforce development system.

Two strategies were found to be useful in convincing employers that they were key customers of the new One-Stop service system: (1) ensuring that One-Stop system partners understood the needs and interests of current and potential employer customers; and (2) ensuring that One-Stop career center staff were prepared to offer employer-friendly services.

Ensuring that One-Stop System Partners Understand the Needs of Employer Customers

Most case study sites used a step-by-step approach to gain a better understanding of employers' needs, beginning with formal and informal employer needs analyses and surveys of current business practices and requirements. During the One-Stop proposal development period and during the first implementation year, almost all local sites surveyed members of the business community to (1) ascertain their labor-exchange needs, (2) assess their opinion of the ability of the public sector system to satisfy those needs, and (3) obtain their suggestions about how to improve services offered to employers.

For example, the Indianapolis Private Industry Council commissioned a private firm to conduct a study of how local employers perceived the public workforce development system. The results of the study—which showed that a large group of employers did not currently use the public labor-exchange system—demonstrated the need for redesigned employer services. Employers indicated that they needed a quicker response to job orders listed by employers and wanted a single contact person or customer service representative assigned to each firm. In Maryland, a state-level Employer Access Workgroup conducted 18 “employer dialogues” to engage 400

employers in discussions about the state's workforce development system relative to employer requirements. One result was the development of a plan for a distinct "employer access cluster" which will allow employers to dial up a bulletin board containing information designed for them, including information on labor market trends, descriptions of job-seekers, and other program information useful to businesses.

Local One-Stop centers often used a variety of additional methods during the first year of One-Stop implementation to engage employer representatives in discussions about their service needs and interests. Often employers were invited to attend "open houses" at the new One-Stop centers to receive a detailed orientation to the services available at the center. These occasions were also used as an opportunity to solicit employer input on how to reshape employer services, while facility and service plans were still in relatively "fluid" stages of development. For example, the Lucas and Wood County (Ohio) One-Stop System, in conjunction with its administrative entity, the Toledo Area Private Industry Council, held a community-wide forum for employers and individual customers on how to improve One-Stop system services. The local Wood County Chamber of Commerce also sponsors "employer after hours" sessions periodically to continue the dialogue about improving Wood County's One-Stop services for employers.

Some One-Stop centers have arranged to obtain employer feedback on a regular basis by convening an ongoing Employer Advisory Committee. For example, at the Waukesha County (Wisconsin) Workforce Development Center, the *Employer Advisory Committee*, which meets on a quarterly basis, provides a structured forum for employer input and feedback. As a result of the employer needs expressed by members of this advisory committee, the Center has undertaken several new activities, including sponsoring employer seminars on topics of significant interest (e.g., the current labor shortage and workforce diversity) and acting as a liaison between businesses and schools to identify individuals interested in apprenticeship positions.

As part of the re-engineering of One-Stop employer services, a number of case study sites were also interested in reaching out beyond their current customer base to recruit additional employers not currently using the public workforce development system. They wanted first to identify the different needs of these employers, then to develop services that would satisfy their requirements. Employers identified as unaccustomed to using the public labor exchange system were characterized as typically

small- or medium-sized, technology-based, and either in need of skilled technicians and middle managers or using a high proportion of part-time or temporary employees.

Several sites indicated that they had taken a proactive approach in contacting new employers to learn about their hiring and workforce development requirements. For example, at the New London *Connecticut Works* Career Center, staff reach out to employers on an individual basis. Instead of waiting for employers to come to the center, center staff regularly read the business section of local newspapers and actively search out new employers. The staff in Connecticut's Business Services Units also assign case managers to large regional employers to ascertain their needs and provide individualized services. Several sites have not only established individual customer service representatives for larger firms, but have also encouraged employer service staff to spend more time visiting individual employers so that they can become more familiar with the detailed operations and hiring needs of specific employers.

In marketing staff-related services to a broader pool of local employers, a number of sites have also approached the growing number of private labor market intermediaries—including “head-hunter” firms, outplacement firms, and firms leasing temporary or permanent contract workers—as important potential One-Stop employer customers, especially for automated information services on potential job applicants. (However, these firms also compete with One-Stop centers in providing labor-exchange services to individual employers.)

Ensuring that One-Stop Career Center Staff are Prepared to Offer Employer-Friendly Services

A major barrier for One-Stop systems to overcome is the common employer perception that public workforce development services are mired in paperwork and bureaucracy and that employer services staff do not care about meeting employers' needs in a timely and efficient way. To change this perception, a number of the One-Stop centers visited for this study were trying to create a “work culture” that emphasizes the importance of customer service and customer satisfaction for both job-seeker and employer services. For example, in Connecticut, state trainers have improved One-Stop customer services by holding multiple rounds of training on three basic customer service skills: (1) telephone skills; (2) basic communication skills, including active listening and problem solving; and (3) skills specifically related to One-Stop services. A state training goal is to encourage “creativity” among local office staff.

Another way that One-Stop centers have improved their capacity to provide “business-friendly” services is to involve One-Stop agency partners experienced in providing individualized services to employers. There are many examples of this strategy among the case study sites. In the Waukesha County (Wisconsin) Workforce Development Center, the participation of the local economic development corporation as a key One-Stop partner clearly enhanced the center’s legitimacy and credibility with area employers. The center is carefully cultivating its image within the business community as a place that employers can go to get their needs met. In the Columbia (Maryland) Employment and Training Center, strong referral and service-coordination linkages with the local economic development agency and the community college’s customized training department improved the capacity of the One-Stop center to address employers’ needs for more intensive services. These off-site partners offered a wide range of employer services, including business planning, business counseling, employer seminars, customized training, and relocation information and assistance. In Connecticut, the state has arranged for staff from the Department of Economic and Community Development to be outstationed within the business services units in Connecticut’s career centers to increase the economic development expertise of business services unit staff.

In addition, a number of centers hired individuals with private sector experience to fill key positions. In many cases, the objective of these staffing decisions was to make it clear that employer services staff understood employer requirements and were motivated to make employers feel like valued customers. For example, most of the ten employer services staff at the FutureWorks Career Center in Springfield Massachusetts were selected because of their experience in the private sector or working with employers. Several other states and case study sites recruited key individuals with private sector management experience to lead One-Stop state and local transformation efforts.

Ensuring that One-Stop Facilities are Attractive and Business-Like in Appearance

Case study sites found that making the One-Stop facility inviting and professional-looking was an important asset in attracting employers as customers. Some One-Stops have reported that center improvements alone seem to have encouraged employer customers to use the center; at these sites, staff were aware that the “dilapidated” condition of the old facility had put off potential employer customers. Particularly attractive to business representatives are centers with ample space for

interviewing and screening new hire candidates, ample parking space, and prominently displayed signs advertising the location of the center.

As a physical reflection of the fact that both job-seekers and employers are core customers, the Waukesha County (Wisconsin) Workforce Development Center has two main entrances—one for employers and one for individual customers. At the business services entrance, reception services are provided by an employee of the Economic Development Corporation. The entrance for individual customers is staffed by a Job Service employee. Neither entrance looks like the “back” of the building. This decision was based on the desire to make each type of customer feel comfortable and perceive that the Center was designed “for them.”

Staff at some centers also commented that refurbished One-Stop facilities succeeded in attracting more high-skilled job seekers, which helped these centers refer a wider range of job seekers to employers looking for experienced or highly-trained workers.

GOAL 2. PROVIDING SIMPLIFIED ACCESS TO AN INTEGRATED MENU OF EMPLOYER SERVICES

Prior to the One-Stop initiative, employers often complained that the services offered by public workforce development agencies were uncoordinated and unresponsive, resulting in duplication and wastefulness. According to one respondent: “...too often you could never get anyone to answer your phone calls, but, on the other hand, you were bombarded with requests for employment and information by a number of organizations and agencies—often different offices or staff from the same agency.”

Case study sites, aware of such employer complaints, determined that it was important to create a simplified and coordinated system by which employers could access the services or information they needed. The system had to provide employers with a unified way to list job openings and get job referrals and a single place to go to get information critical to the success or expansion of their businesses. To create such a system, case study sites developed three basic goals: (1) develop a unified One-Stop plan for the delivery of services to the business community, (2) coordinate the service delivery roles of the various One-Stop partners, and (3) develop a unified marketing approach to inform employers about the services available to them through the One-Stop system.

Planning a Unified Employer Service Approach

Most case study sites formed inter-agency work groups to plan a unified approach for the design and delivery of services to businesses. These committees were typically made up of representatives of key One-Stop partner agencies (e.g., JTPA, ES, UI, welfare-to-work, vocational rehabilitation, community colleges) and included participation by business associations and interested local employers.

Inter-agency teams charged with planning One-Stop employer services were sometimes established at the state level. More often, however, they were formed at the regional, local, or career-center level, so that they could be responsive to the concerns of the local employer community.

Several states designed and coordinated employer services at the regional level, so that regional employer service specialists could support the delivery of a well-developed menu of employer services across all local One-Stop centers within the region. For example, in the Gulf Coast Region of Texas, employer services specialists working out of the ES regional office in Houston are available to help the staff at the Lake Jackson Career Center design and market enhanced training services to local employers, particularly customized recruitment and training services. Similarly, in Connecticut, “business services units” have been established in all nine regions of the state since 1992. These regional units—staffed by individuals from the state agency responsible for overseeing JTPA, ES, and UI services—have forged close alliances with the state agency responsible for economic and community development and the local boards responsible for overseeing JTPA services. Through their inter-agency alliances, business services units hope to become regional brokers of One-Stop services for businesses—offering a range of services directly as well as facilitating employer linkages with other relevant agencies and organizations.

In many cases, local inter-agency teams were developed to plan the design and delivery of an integrated menu of employer services, particularly in local sites where a number of different agencies were co-located within One-Stop centers. For example, an inter-agency job development team was established in Baltimore, Maryland, to clarify how local partners within the Baltimore Career Center Network would coordinate their job development contacts with employers. At the Waukesha County (Wisconsin) Workforce Development Center, an “Integrated Services to Employers Team” comprising representatives from nine local partner agencies was charged with designing a local One-Stop menu of services for employers.

In some sites, planning for unified employer services under the One-Stop initiative was closely linked to efforts to coordinate employer outreach and involvement of private industry in the other two national workforce development initiatives—the school-to-work and welfare-to-work initiatives. Particularly in local economies with tight labor markets and labor shortages, One-Stop partners often found it to their advantage to take a “big picture” approach to workforce preparation and to encourage employer involvement in the design and delivery of services to enhance the skills of future labor market entrants. In this economic context, enhancing the skills of future job seekers was viewed as a high priority by employers; teaching employers how to make effective use of workers drawn from an applicant pool made up of a large number of new labor market entrants and welfare recipients was viewed as a high priority by public sector planners.

Career center staff often tried to build bridges between efforts to prepare youth and welfare recipients for work and efforts to help employers find and train qualified workers. Employer services staff in a number of career centers, including the Waukesha County (Wisconsin) Workforce Development Center, considered it an important part of their role to help employers understand how they could support the entry of inexperienced and unskilled individuals into the future American workforce by improving the workforce preparation programs available to youth. In Iowa, for example, planning for integrated employer services under the One-Stop initiative was closely intertwined with planning and delivering employment-related services to individual welfare recipients under welfare reform.

In Lawrenceburg, Indiana, where the labor market is tight and employers have difficulty finding qualified workers, it was employers themselves who encouraged the One-Stop center to establish closer linkages with the school-to-work program as a way to increase the pool of job applicants available to employers. Specific service linkages between One-Stop and the schools in this rural community include plans for students to use the career and labor market information resources available in One-Stop centers and plans for One-Stop staff to participate in developing and offering job search workshops targeted to high school seniors.

Coordinating the Delivery of Employer Services

Building on the efforts of the inter-agency planning teams, a number of One-Stop career centers developed a consolidated menu of employer services. However, not all case study sites achieved full integration of the One-Stop services provided to local

employers. For example, in Columbia, Maryland, the four primary One-Stop partner agencies—JTPA, ES/UI, the local community college and the local economic development authority—all continued to offer distinct recruitment and outplacement services to employers. Nevertheless, even sites that have stopped short of full integration of employer services have attempted to coordinate employer services by sharing information across the partner agencies about the services available from each partner and the employers contacted by each. Most sites are attempting to move toward a more integrated design for delivering employer services over time, using several different service delivery approaches.

In some sites, the lead One-Stop agency attempted to coordinate employer services using a broker model, by providing information about the employer services provided by all One-Stop partners and facilitating employer referrals among these partners. For example, in Columbia, Maryland, JTPA and ES/UI staff located at the One-Stop career center attempted to broker the diverse services for employers offered by all four key One-Stop partners by increasing employer awareness of the available services and facilitating cross-agency referrals. In particular, One-Stop career center staff informally coordinated agency contacts with local employers and worked to increase employer awareness of the enhanced business services available from the business resource center operated at a separate location by the local economic development authority and from the continuing education center of the local community college².

To coordinate employer services, One-Stop partners often developed ways to share information about employers such as the history of employer contacts made by various One-Stop partners, and whether a firm already had a “customer service representative” or designated liaison assigned by one of the partners. Shared data bases were used to coordinate employer contacts and prevent duplication of effort in the Waukesha County (Wisconsin) Workforce Development Center and the Minnesota Career Center in Anoka County. As described in the next section, the development of a shared database with information on the detailed hiring requirements for all active employer job listings also proved to be a very effective mechanism that enabled One-

² Enhanced business services available from the employer resource center included business planning, business counseling, employer seminars, and relocation information and assistance.

Stop partners in several sites to improve the timeliness and efficiency of applicant referrals.

In other sites coordinated delivery of employer services among on-site One-Stop partners was achieved by assigning specialized service delivery roles to different partner agencies, to take advantage of the specialized skills of each agency's staff. For example, in Minnesota—by state fiat—the state Employment Service was designated as the agency responsible for maintaining job listings and providing labor-exchange services for all One-Stop partner agencies. Other local partner roles are negotiated at the local level to take advantage of “what each agency does best.” In the Waukesha County (Wisconsin) Workforce Development Center, employer service functions are shared among (1) the Job Service and technical college placement service, which provide labor market information and labor exchange services; (2) the technical college's center for business and industry, which offers customized training and assistance with business expansion or relocation, and (3) the local economic development corporation, which helps link businesses to various forms of financial support.

Yet another approach for the coordinated delivery of employer services occurred in sites where One-Stop partners developed “shared” or consolidated employer services, in which staff from multiple agency partners participated. Employers tended to respond very positively to evidence of coordination and resource-sharing among public agencies. For example, at the Connecticut Works Career Center in New London, Connecticut, four different public One-Stop agencies and several community-based organizations and JTPA-service-provider organizations jointly sponsored a job fair. Staff attributed the high level of employer participation in this job fair at least partly to the high level of inter-agency cooperation achieved.

Additional examples of shared or consolidated employer services include the following:

- An integrated interagency case management team for employers, with one liaison or case manager assigned to each employer.
- The provision of integrated post-employment follow-on services to employers who hire One-Stop customers.
- The development of a One-Stop employer resource center that offers employers information about hiring laws and rules and best practices in recruiting, screening, and hiring new employees, and provides referral sources for management assistance and worker training.

- A unique partnership to use the state library system (in Connecticut) as a single point of access for making a range of automated information available to employers.

Informing Employers about the Range of Services Available from One-Stop Partners

To be successful in coordinating the delivery of employer services, One-Stop partners found that they needed to make sure that employers were aware of the range of services available to them through the One-Stop system. To meet this need, One-Stop partners developed a variety of consolidated marketing, information, and referral mechanisms, including the following:

- A dial-up bulletin board service that provides automated description of employer services available from various One-Stop partners.
- A detailed face-to-face orientation for employers visiting One-Stop centers for the first time.
- A marketing videotape targeted to employers with information about all the services available to employers from the One-Stop system.
- A “calendar of events” oriented to employers on the state or local One-Stop system’s Web site.

GOAL 3. LINKING EMPLOYERS TO HIGH-QUALITY INFORMATION RELATED TO THEIR NEEDS AND INTERESTS

Businesses need access to a wide range of information about other businesses, labor markets, workforce characteristics, and local communities in order to make sound decisions about initial business formation, the location of business facilities, and what strategies to use for promoting business growth and expansion. This information has traditionally been provided by state workforce development agencies in the form of periodic published reports and statistical abstracts. Employers have criticized published data for being out-of-date by the time it becomes available, as well as for not being sensitive enough to regional and local variations within a state.

Improved technology for collecting, retrieving, and sharing information has made it possible for One-Stop systems to redesign the ways that information is provided to local businesses. Overall, these changes are intended to

- Be responsive to employers' expressed information needs and interests.
- Coordinate and unify the design and delivery of high quality information relevant to business needs.

- Improve the timeliness and accuracy of the information, and allow employers to extract information at the level of aggregation relevant to their needs (e.g., state, locality, or census tract).
- Expand the range of types of information available to employers through One-Stop centers.

In this section, we describe the different approaches used by the case study sites to provide employers with high-quality information on (1) labor markets, (2) education and training resources, (3) government regulations and programs, and (4) business management issues and assistance. In most sites, information is available through several different modes, including automated self-service options and staffed service delivery, to give employers a choice about the way they receive the information. Exhibit 10-1 describes how several case study sites provided high quality information to employers.

Providing Labor Market Information

Accurate labor market information is essential for business planning and forecasting. In some sites, the state still prepares and mails periodic labor market reports to employers. Increasingly, however, labor market information is also being offered through a variety of more flexible formats, including user-friendly electronic databases from which employers can retrieve the particular information they want.

To make core One-Stop information services readily available to employers, most of the case study sites have developed dial-up electronic bulletin boards or Internet Web sites that permit employers to view and retrieve a wide range of information on occupation and industry trends, employment levels, characteristics of job seekers, and features of local communities. For example, Texas has developed an automated database called SOCRATES that can provide detailed labor market information to a variety of users, including employers. The state of Ohio has plans to establish an electronic bulletin board to provide employers with integrated information on current and projected labor market demands. To improve the labor exchange process, Ohio also plans to provide an analysis of specific skills demanded and supplied in different labor markets.

Beyond the self-service labor market information services developed for employer use, a number of One-Stop systems have put considerable energy into designing

Exhibit 10-1
Examples of Providing
Employers with High-Quality Information

Connecticut	<p>The Business Service Units within One-Stop career centers offer workplace consultation services to employers to help them understand issues related to total quality and performance competitiveness, and public laws and regulations related to their responsibilities as employers.</p> <p>The Department of Higher Education has a toll-free information number that provides information on career and education opportunities throughout the state.</p>
Maryland	<p>The state has designed a special electronic bulletin board for employer access that includes labor force data, information on current job seekers, and other information specifically designed for use by employers.</p>
Minnesota	<p>Using its One-Stop implementation grant funds, Minnesota hired six regional labor market analysts whose job it is to ensure that centers are well-stocked with labor market information. These analysts are also available to support local office staff in interpreting labor market trends and preparing special analyses for employers. They also make presentations to business groups about local labor market conditions.</p>

additional information supports for the business community. Services developed across the case study sites include the following:

- Seminars for employers on local labor market trends and strategies for success.
- The availability of “labor market analysts” who provide individualized consultations on labor market conditions for individuals or groups of business representatives.
- The availability of detailed reports on the education and demographics of residents in specific local areas, designed for use by businesses considering relocating to or expanding into the area.

Providing Information about Training and Education Resources

Because employers are increasingly concerned about how to enhance the basic and occupational skills of their workers over time, information about education and training resources has become increasingly important to them. As described in the chapter on services for job-seekers, many One-Stop centers have been working to develop resource libraries and automated information systems with detailed listings of education and training providers. These systems include information about the skills covered in each program, and—as part of the development of Consumer Report Cards—information on the placements obtained by graduates of various training programs.

To supplement these basic resource listings, One-Stop systems are offering employers more detailed information about USDOL-sponsored apprenticeship programs, public and private providers of training for incumbent workers, and funding sources for training. This information is available in the form of written materials, as well as through consultations with program staff about customized training services available from local technical schools and community colleges. Employers can use this information to find out about the fees charged for these services, as well as how to obtain training subsidies targeted to “at risk” or expanding firms through government-funded programs. One-Stop centers in Minnesota, for example, provide employers with information about these programs as technical assistance when they are applying for funding. Similarly, in Texas, employers are provided with information about and assistance in applying for the “Smart Jobs” program, which offers state funding for workforce training for “at risk” employers.

Providing Information about Government Regulations and Programs

Another of the criticisms that employers have about the public sector is that government regulations and paperwork are too complex and the multiplicity of programs is too confusing. In response, several of the case study sites have attempted to provide employers with a centralized source of information about government regulations and programs, as well as support in dealing with them. The objectives of these services are to reduce the burden of government-required paperwork for employers and to minimize the staff time spent dealing with rules infractions, penalties, and appeals.

Through planned “employer resource centers,” employers will have access to information on such government laws and regulations as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the requirement for early employer notification of plans for large-scale layoffs, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) requirements, Unemployment Insurance compensation and related regulations, and tax credits for hiring members of targeted groups. Some One-Stop systems located “employer resource centers” at the same sites as One-Stop job-seeker services. In other One-Stop systems, employer resource centers were located off-site in a separate center specializing in business services.

In most sites, information on compliance with governmental regulations was provided through consultation with center staff. However, in some sites, information was also available in self-service format, either through computer access at the career center or via remote access from the employer’s own worksite. Maryland plans to have a range of information available to employers via remote access, including information on WARN, ADA, and other employment-related legislation. In Minnesota, employer “libraries” are required to provide detailed information on a wide range of employment-related programs and regulations. Other One-Stop partners and programs, such as Vocational Rehabilitation and Veterans’ Employment Services, are also expected to provide information on their programs for inclusion in the employer libraries.

Providing Information about Business Management Topics

A final type of information that many One-Stop centers began to offer to employer customers—drawing on the expertise of economic and business development partners—was information related to business start-up and business management. In

some One-Stop centers, employer seminars or information sessions were developed to respond to particular management-related concerns expressed by local businesses. For example, the FutureWorks Career Center in Springfield Massachusetts provides seminars on a variety of workforce issues requested by employers. The Wood County (Ohio) Employment Resource Center planned to poll employers on their interest in participating in workshops on such topics as violence in the workplace and workforce diversity.

In other One-Stop centers, employer seminars or information services focus on business startup and quality management. The Arlington (Texas) Career Center provides customers with information on small business start-up. Business service units within Connecticut's One-Stop centers offer consultations to employers seeking information regarding performance competitiveness and total quality management.

GOAL 4. IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES TO BETTER MEET EMPLOYER HIRING NEEDS

A number of different One-Stop partner agencies have offered labor exchange services to employers in the past. The state Employment Service agencies have been the primary providers of such services, but many additional agencies (e.g., JTPA service providers, educational institutions, welfare-to-work providers, and programs serving disabled individuals) have also offered employers labor exchange services. These services have included the posting of job listings, recruitment and screening of applicants for posted jobs, job matching to link job applicants to available work opportunities, and job development activities designed to make employers aware of the availability of qualified workers. As described previously, employers have criticized such services because of the duplication of employer contacts across agencies, the lack of timeliness in referring applicants, and the absence of appropriate skills among the referred applicants.

The One-Stop systems and centers included in this study have made a number of changes to their core labor-exchange services in response to these criticisms. Key strategies used in the case study sites included the following: (1) improving procedures used to list jobs and recruit interested applicants, (2) clarifying descriptions of jobs and required skills, and (3) improving the tools for matching job seekers to employers.

Improving Job Listing and Applicant Recruitment Procedures

Developments in information technology have made it possible to create improved job-listing systems that are more sophisticated and easier for customers to use and that can be shared among local One-Stop partners and across geographic units. With the advent of computer technology and inter-connectivity, job listings collected by one One-Stop partner or at one location can be easily shared throughout the state or local One-Stop system as well as nationwide. Although state job information systems are at different stages of development, all states now provide information about state employment opportunities to America's Job Bank (AJB), and most have the capability to offer their own customers on-site access to information about jobs throughout the state and across the nation.

As described in the chapter on job-seeker services, automated job listing services are a nearly universal core service at all One-Stop centers. From the employer perspective, the use of automated databases to disseminate job announcements greatly increases the effectiveness of listing a job with a public agency, since, in most sites, listing a job with a single One-Stop partner now means that the listing will be shared among all local partners as well as nationwide. In some sites, public agency staff continue to screen interested applicants before referring them to employers. However, in an increasing number of sites, employers are being encouraged to post "unsuppressed" job orders that include the employer's identity in the public listing and instruct interested applicants to apply directly to the employer.

Thus, under One-Stop systems, employers can seek a much greater range of types of workers through the public labor exchange services, and they have more choices about how involved they want to be in applicant screening and selection. Although not all employers are comfortable with using unsuppressed job orders—because they fear being deluged with large numbers of inappropriate applicants—some employers have found that unsuppressed job orders result in a higher rate of success in filling positions. These employers report a larger applicant stream and a quicker response to job announcements compared to the use of suppressed listings (in which the employers depended on program staff to screen and refer specific job seekers). To deal with the increased applicant flow generated by automated listings, many of these employers are developing more sophisticated in-house applicant screening and selection procedures or purchasing help with the early stages of applicant screening from public or private labor market intermediaries.

One-Stop systems generally allow employers to select the method of posting job listings they are most comfortable with. Where the technology is in place to allow employers to list their own job orders, a “self-service” option is available. These One-Stop centers invite or encourage employers to post their own job listings via dial-up bulletin boards (in Ohio), faxed-in job listings (in Indiana), or direct Internet access. In many sites, however, the self-service option is not available or not encouraged, and employers still depend on One-Stop staff to take job orders by telephone.

The advantage of making the job listing process a self-service function is that it frees up staff to provide other services to employers and job seekers and gives employers greater control over the recruitment function. However, retaining job posting as a staffed function increases the opportunity for One-Stop center staff to (1) develop a personalized relationship with an individual company’s human resources staff, (2) become familiar with the firm’s hiring needs and counsel them on writing effective and accurate job descriptions, and (3) assess the firm’s interest in receiving additional One-Stop services.

Clarifying Job Descriptions and Skill Requirements

As another way of improving their labor-exchange function, a number of One-Stop systems offered to help employers do a better job of specifying the skills and qualities that they want and need in job seekers. In contrast to the technology-based improvements to the job listing process described above, improving the effectiveness of job descriptions and skills statements usually requires individualized attention from a One-Stop employer service representative.

One strategy for improving the accuracy and clarity of job descriptions is initiating a new skills-based system to replace outdated industry and occupation codes. This is being done at the national level through the development of O*NET. However, even before changing to a whole new system of describing jobs, a number of One-Stop centers have developed procedures to help employers identify and describe the essential skills that job seekers must possess to be successful in a given position. For example, staff at the Minnesota Career Center in Anoka County have found that asking employers more questions about the skills required for a particular job increases the likelihood of referring appropriate applicants. Similarly, other sites have encouraged employer service representatives to visit the job-site to get a clear understanding of the business and the nature of the work performed by employees.

A number of One-Stop centers are also offering to help moderate-sized and large employers clarify their hiring needs by conducting more formal functional assessments of jobs. Among the services offered are job/task analyses performed at the employer's job site, which are intended to identify the skills necessary for successful job performance. In some case study sites, these services are being offered free of charge as part of the menu of core services available to all employers. In other sites, formal functional analyses of job performance are offered on a fee-for-service basis.³

Improving the Tools for Matching Job Seekers to Employers

Matching an applicant's skills to those an employer requires for a particular position is often difficult. To reduce the number of "mismatches," some sites are developing sophisticated job matching software. Other sites are helping interested employers take over the task of screening and selecting new hires from the pool of available workers by giving employers direct access to "talent banks"—searchable databases with information about current job seekers.

Some states have designed sophisticated job matching systems to assist local staff in providing effective labor exchange services to employers. Minnesota SkillsNet and Ohio JobNet are examples of statewide automated job information systems that can help One-Stop staff match the characteristics of current job seekers to the characteristics being sought by employers through current job listings. To make these systems work, local sites must collect and record accurate information about job seekers using characteristics and measures that are compatible with those used by employers in their job orders. For example, in the Anoka County (Minnesota) Career Center, a client assessment database shared by the center and vocational and technical colleges helps provide information on job seekers as inputs to the matching process.

Job-matching systems require a fairly high degree of staff involvement. Local centers that emphasize job-matching systems have made a commitment to assisting employers individually with their labor exchange needs.

In contrast, some states have decided to de-emphasize the job matching responsibilities of public sector staff. For example, instead of performing any

³ One proprietary system used in several sites to analyze job tasks and create a required applicant profile prior to screening job applicants is Work Keys, a system developed by American College Testing (now ACT, Inc.) in Iowa City.

automated job matching, the state of Wisconsin now depends on job seekers to select employer job listings for which they are qualified and market themselves directly to employers.

In a number of other states and local sites, One-Stop systems are encouraging employers to play a more active role in screening applicants. Under the “Talent Bank” initiative, employers are offered direct access to automated listings describing job seekers, enabling them to do their own direct review, screening, and selection. This initiative, piloted in five states and promoted for implementation nationally by USDOL, depends on the ability of employers’ own hiring representatives to use technology to scan information about the individuals in the applicant pool. Access to an unscreened pool of applicant resumes can be a powerful tool in the hands of trained human resource professionals with software designed to search and sort for desired characteristics. It is not yet clear, however, whether this technology will be embraced by employers, or whether they will want public employer service representatives to continue doing the hands-on work of screening and matching job applicants prior to referral.

As described in the next section, most case study sites have moved beyond the improvement of labor exchange services to concern themselves with expanding their range of enhanced services as a part of their strategy for providing improved services to employers in all areas of workforce development.

GOAL 5. OFFERING ENHANCED EMPLOYER SERVICES

Defining employers as core customers of the public workforce development system, and involving economic development agencies, community and technical colleges, and business-oriented groups as active members of One-Stop partnerships has led to plans for establishing a number of enhanced services for employer customers. In most cases, the enhanced services are activities that one or more agency partners are already offering to employers. Under One-Stop, state and local partners are beginning to organize these services into integrated systems.

At the time of the evaluation site visits, most of the case study sites were still in the early stages of developing, systematizing, and deciding how to finance enhanced services for employers. Exhibit 10-2 describes the enhanced services under

Exhibit 10-2
Examples of Enhanced Employer Services

Connecticut	<p>The Business Service Unit in the New London Career Center offers assessment and screening services to employers who are undertaking large-scale hiring efforts.</p> <p>The center also helps employers plan improvements in their manufacturing technology and plan and provide customized training for current workers.</p>
Indiana	<p>Enhanced services offered to employers by staff at the Eastside Indianapolis Workforce Development Center include assistance in meeting affirmative action requirements, customized analysis of labor market information for employers seeking to relocate to the area, and job/task analyses for employers interested in planning customized training for their employees.</p>
Iowa	<p>At the Des Moines Workforce Development Center, the ES agency, the economic development group of the area community college, and the chamber of commerce are developing a range of fee-for-service options for employers, including recruitment and screening for large-scale hiring efforts, and the use of the Work Keys assessment system to screen potential new hires.</p> <p>Management assistance offered to employers includes a train-the-trainer program for company supervisors.</p>
Texas	<p>The Arlington Career Center links employers to entrepreneurial and small business start-up training programs offered by a number of local agencies and organizations.</p>
Wisconsin	<p>At the Waukesha County Workforce Development Center, various partner agencies offer customized training and consulting services, including training on total quality management techniques; assistance in obtaining economic development financing and business loans; and business needs analysis.</p>

development in several case study sites. Across the case study sites, these services are of three general types: (1) assessment of the skills of a firm's incumbent workers combined with help in designing and delivering training to enhance these skills; (2) intensive customized recruitment and screening services for large-scale hiring efforts; and (3) management assistance and support for helping firms start up, remain financially viable, and expand. Most case study sites plan to charge user fees for enhanced employer services as a way to generate revenues to support the costs of providing the services. However, in many local areas, some public funding supports are available to firms that meet particular eligibility qualifications; such firms may be at risk of downsizing or have the potential to bring many new jobs into the community.

Services to Assess and Train Incumbent Workers

As described earlier, employers are facing an increasing need to support ongoing training of existing workers, to redress basic educational deficits, and to provide skills enhancements. Both public and private sector education and training providers have developed specialized fee-based services to address these needs.

Through One-Stop core services, employers are informed about the resources available to them from public workforce development agencies in planning and providing training for incumbent workers. For example, in the Waukesha County (Wisconsin) Workforce Development Center, employers are informed that the technical college—an active partner in the One-Stop center—has a long history of offering on-site or off-site customized training to incumbent workers, including training on total quality management tools and techniques. To make these services more affordable to small- and moderate-sized employers, the technical college was planning to develop some off-site “generic” TQM training sessions to which firms could send employees. In the Des Moines metropolitan area, employer customers are informed about the Economic Development Group housed within the local community college that offers subsidized employee retraining services to expanding and relocating businesses, through a state-funded “New Jobs” incentive program.

Customized Recruitment and Screening Services for Large-Scale Hiring Efforts

A number of the case study sites were developing customized assessment and screening services for employers who were undertaking large-scale hiring efforts and wanted to out-source the early stages of the hiring process. For firms designated as economic development targets, these services might be provided at no cost, as

explained above. For other firms, centers offered customized hiring assistance on a fee-for-service basis.

Management Assistance and Training

In some case study sites, One-Stop staff are available to assist major employers with meeting their ongoing management needs by providing business planning data and customized analysis of labor market information, assisting firms in recruiting for specialized positions, and consulting on issues related to government regulations and the hiring process. As explained above, these services might be provided free of charge to firms that are targeted as having important economic development potential (e.g., a firm considering locating a new manufacturing facility in the local community) and offered on a fee-for-service basis to additional firms.

A planned Employer Resource Center within the Des Moines Workforce Development Center will inform employers about the availability of management assistance. The resource center will offer employers information about all aspects of the hiring process, including information about hiring laws and rules, information about “best practices” in recruiting, screening, and hiring new employers, and referral to technical assistance and training resources. The center will be funded with Wagner Peyser dollars and will emphasize self-service information, with staff consultation available when needed. More detailed train-the-trainer workshops are also being planned, in cooperation with the local chamber of commerce, to teach management staff and front-line supervisors about effective skills for work supervisors.

ANALYSIS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN DEVELOPING EMPLOYER SERVICES

Although all case study sites identified the task of redesigning employer services as essential to the ultimate success of their One-Stop initiatives, refining services for individual job-seekers often took precedence during the first year of One-Stop implementation. Consequently, while case study sites made good progress in planning improved employer services, implementation of these plans was often scheduled for the second or third implementation year.

Overall, a number of factors influenced the design and implementation of improved and enhanced employer services:

- Technology advances provided the opportunity for sites to introduce new and more sophisticated automated information products, including

job and resume listings and job/applicant matching software. However, in some case study sites the technology infrastructure for supporting the improved labor exchange tools had not yet been completed at the local level.

- One-Stop agency partners often lacked experience providing comprehensive services to employers. While this did not deter case study sites from developing sound employer services and adopting effective strategies and mechanisms to serve employers, it required that planners carefully develop and analyze their plans and consult with other business-led entities before “rolling out” the employer services package.
- A number of One-Stop sites were reluctant to market redesigned and enhanced employer services until the re-engineered system was complete. Thus, employers were not always aware of the availability of new and improved services to address their hiring and other business needs and interests.

Despite the many challenges facing case study sites during the first year, progress in improving the effectiveness of One-Stop services and products offered to the employer community was made in a number of key areas. Not content to wait for the employer community come to them, One-Stop centers devised a number of strategies to reach out to the business community to encourage them to “give the new system a chance.” Case study sites also understood the value of first impressions; they tried to ensure that the business community knew that the “look and feel” of the transformed One-Stop system and its unified menu of employer services was different from the previous way of doing business.

Case study sites took very seriously their charge to become customer-oriented. To understand the employer community well enough to be capable of meeting the needs expressed by employers, One-Stop agencies and partners actively sought the participation and advice of business-related organizations and institutions. They also developed diverse service delivery mechanisms that balanced self-service options with the opportunity for individualized consultations and assistance from business-friendly One-Stop staff.

- Most case study sites can count among their achievements one or more of the following:
The involvement of a broad range of business-oriented partners in planning for One-Stop employer services. Almost all local case study sites had developed strong working relationships with economic and

community development agencies and departments, chambers of commerce, and community colleges' business services units, all of which have credibility with employers. These organizations became key players in analyzing employers' needs and developing new and improved services and products for employers.

- *The development of a range of services and delivery mechanisms that gave employers choices about what types of services to receive and how to receive them.* Most case study sites went beyond providing the core services often identified with the public labor exchange system. Expanded services included consultation and technical assistance on current workforce needs, assistance in developing training programs for incumbent workers, and providing training on small business start-up and business management and supervisory skills.
- *A simplification of employer access to key services.* Simplifying access to employer services required that sites change their objectives from program-based goals to the customer-driven goal of meeting the needs of local employers. To achieve this new goal, important modifications were made in almost all sites, including providing employers with "account representatives" to coordinate their different needs and to broker services and information on their behalf.

While case study sites made impressive progress during their first year in redesigning employer services and beginning to implement their plans, most sites planned to continue to implement their vision of transformed services to employers over time. Clearly, designing and implementing such a large undertaking was still a "work in progress" at the end of the first implementation year. Challenges that remain to be addressed include the following:

- The need to assess the demand for fee-based services and determine whether and how the public workforce development system can compete with private sector providers in these areas. Sites varied widely as to the employer services they provided and on what basis they were provided. Several sites indicated that they were still in the process of deciding which services to offer to employers for a fee and how to establish the fee structure.
- The need to develop a wider variety of employer services and products and market these products to a greater mix of employers. A number of employer customers commented that the One-Stop centers were still a "well-kept secret."
- The need to assess the effects of improved employer services on customer satisfaction and labor exchange outcomes. Although some case study sites have developed employer satisfaction systems to

measure initial impact on the employer community, and a few sites were developing “benchmarks” to measure the effectiveness of center strategies and services, most sites have not developed systematic methods to analyze the impact of improved and expanded employer services on the local business community.

- The need to convince employers to use One-Stop systems to meet the full range of their hiring needs. Previous sections of this chapter have referred to the perception among employers that the public labor exchange system offers only candidates with little or no work experience and a narrow range of skills. To meet the challenges of welfare reform without being stereotyped as dealing with economically disadvantaged workers and low-wage job opportunities alone, One-Stop partners have to build and maintain a reputation for providing effective services to employers seeking workers at all levels of experience, skill, and education.

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